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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ANNOUNCES \$5.4 MILLION FOR THE EARLY
MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE**

Screening in Grades K-3 for Social and Emotional Difficulties will Help Students Succeed

SACRAMENTO

State Mental Health Director Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D. today announced \$5.4 million in grants to California schools under the Early Mental Health Initiative (EMHI). EMHI provides three-year grants to publicly funded elementary schools to provide prevention and intervention services to children in kindergarten through third grade.

"Getting a solid foundation in the first few years of school is critical for a child's future academic success," said Dr. Mayberg. The goals of EMHI are to enhance the social and emotional development of young children through early intervention when school adjustment problems first arise.

Children, who tend to be excessively shy or withdrawn, overly active, aggressive, have learning difficulties or are disruptive in the classroom, may benefit from this program. EMHI programs also promote collaboration between families, school staff, and local mental health agencies in addressing the needs of at-risk children.

Services are provided to children who are experiencing mild to moderate school adjustment difficulties who may be at risk of developing serious problems later in life. These services are provided through a child aide that is specifically trained and supervised to work with identified students on a one-to-one basis. This type of early intervention services has proven to be effective.

In the 2002-03, Governor Davis allocated \$15 million to support programs funded through EMHI. The new grants will fund 74 EMHI programs in 170 school sites throughout the state. Additionally, \$8.9 million is allocated to fund 128 grants for 318 school sites that are in the second and third years of grant funding. Approximately 23,077 students will receive support and intervention services through EMHI during the 2002-03 school year.

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